



NJDOE News

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\$8.5 Million in Governor's Preschool Quality Enhancement Award Grants Available to Strengthen Early Learning for Disadvantaged Children

New Jersey preschool providers and schools can now apply for new state grants to improve early childhood experiences for economically disadvantaged children who live in non-Abbott school districts. Governor Jon S. Corzine has included \$8.5 million in the current state budget for the Preschool Quality Enhancement Awards (PQEA) program.

"New Jersey has made a solid investment in quality preschool as a primary way to help children from low-income backgrounds overcome obstacles to learning," Governor Corzine said. "The Preschool Quality Enhancement Awards will give more children in more New Jersey communities a chance to benefit from the same kinds of experiences."

"Quality preschool experiences can make a real difference in the academic careers of our young people," said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy, who noted that academic research for early childhood programs such as Head Start have found that they have contributed to higher levels of achievement for students in later years. She also noted that disadvantaged students in the Abbott school districts who were exposed to quality preschool experiences beginning at the age of three several years ago, are showing encouraging gains of performance in the third and fourth grades, as measured by the NJ ASK exam.

"Through this grant program, these same experiences can be expanded in non-Abbott communities that enroll a high percentage of disadvantaged students," Commissioner Davy said.

Governor Corzine and Commissioner Davy noted that the state will continue to maintain its current level of support for public preschool programs in the Abbott school districts. More than \$500 million in state aid is currently directed to Abbott preschools.

Applicants seeking PQEA funds for existing preschool programs must submit applications by December 4, 2008. Prospective applicants must represent programs that:

- Currently provide full-day and full-year preschool services in non-Abbott districts for 3- and 4-year old children;
- Demonstrate that at least 75 percent of the children served are at or below the poverty level;
- Are licensed by the Department of Human Services, if a private provider or Head Start program; and
- Have three or more preschool classrooms. Sites with fewer classrooms may apply, but must work collaboratively with another provider or a school district.

Funds may be used to:

- Support certification efforts for classroom teachers and teacher assistants;
- Select and implement appropriate research-based curriculum and assessment;
- Enhance teacher professional development; and
- Implement other strategies necessary to align these programs with the high-quality standards of New Jersey's Abbott preschool programs.

Grant recipients will receive \$3,000 per low-income child enrolled in their existing programs. The grant year will run from February 1, 2008 through January 31, 2009.

In addition to the \$8.5 million in grant awards, PQEA has additional funding of \$1.5 million to be used to assess the nature and quality of preschool services available to families throughout the state, a first step in identifying and prioritizing New Jersey's early care and education needs.

Nearly 50,000 New Jersey preschoolers benefit from state-supported programs. In addition to state aid for Abbott preschool programs, New Jersey provides \$30-\$35 million each year in Early Childhood Program Aid to benefit approximately 7,400 students in 101 districts. In another state grant program called ELLI (Early Launch to Learning Initiative), approximately \$2.6 million has been awarded this year for programs benefiting preschoolers in 28 school districts.

The NGO for PQEA is posted on the New Jersey Department of Education Web-site at:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/grants/gropps.shtml>

For the grant application to be complete, the NGO must be used in combination with the Discretionary Grant application, available online at:

www.nj.gov/njded/grants/discretionary/apps